

ARLINGTON TREE COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes -- Wednesday, July 11, 2018, 7:30pm, Lyons Room, Town Hall

Attending: Members: Ed Trembly, Brian Turnbaugh, Susan Stamps, Steve Moore, Tim Lecuivre (Tree Warden). Visitors: Phil Tedesco, Joe Kirylo, Beth Melofchik

1. Assign note taking for meeting minutes

- Steve volunteered to take the minutes.

2. Approve June meeting minutes

- The lack of a sufficient quorum of Committee members precluded an approval vote; deferred to the scheduled August meeting.

3. Community Tree Canopy Program – (John)

- A brief history of the program was provided to the visitors by Susan.
- Further discussion deferred to the scheduled August meeting.

4. DPW Tree Department Update (Tim)

- Arlington Tree Management Plan formally submitted to Julie Coop of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's Urban and Community Forestry Program on July 29th; awaiting formal acceptance.
- Multiple other towns have shown interest in the Tree Management Plan, our process for its development and completion, and Tree Inventory.
- Tree watering by DPW workers on overtime was begun today; Tim will check for the results tomorrow. The immediate focus will be on the 100 street trees planted by the Town this past spring, and the 13 trees planted by the State along Mass. Ave. in East Arlington (three of the 13 have died). The watering priority is 1.) rootball-and-burlap trees planted last spring, 2.) the bare-root trees planted last spring, and 3.) the 200 trees planted in the spring and fall of 2017. When added together with the trees planted in various schools and parks, roughly 500 new trees are currently in need of regular watering by residents, volunteer groups, and the DPW. The possibility of a dedicated DPW individual from the Tree Crew assigned full-time to the watering program was discussed.
- No new tree hearings scheduled; the objections to tree removals at the Town Hall gardens, previously raised at a hearing, are to be partially appealed to the BoS.
- A dispute has developed between the 16 Kensington Rd. / 17 Brantwood Rd. property developers and the neighbors about tree removal that is not covered by the Tree By-law. In addition, the developers have related their intent to remove a public street tree in absence of any approval by the Tree Warden; the Tree Warden is closely following the unfolding situation, and will act if required. The property includes a small portion of designated conservation land/easement.
- Whittemore Park renovation project planning has increasingly taken into account both residents' and Tree Committee concerns about potential removals; the final planning recommendations will include multiple options for the way ahead. Resident Beth Melofchik related some of her concerns about the proposed plans.

- Additional on-going projects involving tree activity are occurring at the Old Burying Ground, Wilson Park, Mill Brook / Mystic River, maintenance by the Town Tree Crew, and Eversource tree maintenance.

5. Gas Leaks Task Force Report (Susan)

- Susan gave a recap of the Task Force activities, as well as fact that National Grid is unable to clearly state whether or not the gas leaks that killed the street trees from Jason/Academy Sts. to Pleasant St. along Mass. Ave. (116" of DBH) have been repaired. Testing of those planting pits and nearby storm drains / sanitary sewers by the Tree Warden with the gas detector we have rented from HEET for 30 days have shown low, high, and dangerously high levels of leaking natural gas in evidence. National Grid employees onsite were informed by Tim of his findings, but took no obvious action.
- Joe Kirylo, a representative of the currently "locked-out" union that works for National Grid, related his concerns about both new and ongoing street repair/maintenance projects relative to the dangers of gas main breakage, damage, and gas leak repair in light of the current labor/management negotiation impasse.

6. Procedures/Policies for Town Construction Projects and Tree Watering (Susan/Tim)

- Susan related discussions between herself, the DPW Director, Mary Ellen Aronow (Tree Committee Co-Chair), and Eliza Burden (Tree Committee Co-Chair) on the Committee's recent approval of motions to recommend the Town's adoption of two policies (via the BoS), one on the early involvement of the Tree Warden in all Town projects which impact Town trees, and the other regarding the establishment of two-year watering plans for Town trees that are part of Town projects. Those discussions had yielded some concerns about perceptions upon moving forward with these recommendations. The Committee members discussed the various issues raised in those earlier forums. Resident Phil Tedesco shared his frustrations with lack of much organization related to watering plans and contract warranty enforcement for the new tree plantings at the Thompson School, as an instructive example of why these Town-wide policies might be necessary. The Committee members present generally felt that we should continue to move forward with the recommendations as they stand, and Susan will relate that to Mary Ellen and Eliza. If further Committee action is required, it will be delayed until September, when both more and concerned members are available.

7. Publicity / Community Outreach

- Town Day booth registration (Steve) -- done; ATC save the date to be available
- Tree watering at Scannell, Thompson, ABG Club, Tennis Courts (John) -- Tim says this is on-going, with a lot of good work from Boy Scouts, AHS students, John Ellis and Phil Tedesco.
- Write Advocate articles/letters to Editor (Ed, Steve, Mara) – Watering encouragement letter submitted to Advocate by Ed.

8. New Business

- Correspondence:

- A. At Tim's suggestion, the website's link to the Town's suggested tree list needs to be removed, and the process to provide useful support to private tree choices needs to be re-thought.
- B. Street trees and solar panels -- there is no explicit procedure regarding public street trees' interference with solar panel utility; can be handled by the current Tree Hearing process. This is not significant problem at this point.
- C. Wilson Park -- Copper Beech, Princeton Elm, and Linden are all being considered to replace removed tree.

Next Meeting: Committee meets the 2nd Wednesday of the month, August 8.